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THE FEEDING OF CHILDREN

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(Continued)

It is during the latter part of the period covered by the previous paper and the first part of this—namely, from three to six years of age—that many children begin their education at the kindergarten, and for this reason the food is still an important consideration in the child's life, for it is just at this time that the child's nervous system is developing.

There is no one food that is peculiarly a brain food, but, as was stated in the first paper, a child needs a generous, varied, and mixed diet. He needs plenty of albuminous material in the shape of eggs, meat, milk, or fish to form the tissues of his rapidly growing body and brain. He needs fat in the shape of cream, milk, butter, olive oil, cocoa, and cornmeal to act as fuel for the body during its increased activity, and in winter he needs proportionately more fat or fuel in order to make up for the increased loss of heat. He needs carbohydrates in the form of vegetables and cereals to act as fuel, furnish the necessary mineral salts, and act as laxatives. He needs green vegetables and fruits to act as laxatives and furnish the unknown something that prevents scurvy and malnutrition.

About the most important chemical constituent of the brain is lecithin, a body found especially in the nervous system and also in the yolk of eggs, peas, beans, and rapidly growing vegetables. But it is very improbable that these foods have any particular power to nourish the brain on this account, although they are all good foods.

A child should not try to study or do much work on an empty stomach. If it is impossible to get breakfast ready for an ambitious child who wants to study early in the morning, a glass of warm milk and piece of toast or cracker may be supplied before the regular breakfast. The child should be made to get up early enough so that it is not necessary to gulp the food down in order to get to school on time. It is well to start in early in the child's life to train it to have a regular time for the daily movement of the bowels. An infant under one year of age can often be taught to do this. The best time for this is right after breakfast, and this time should be chosen and strictly adhered to. It allows some time for the food to be digested in an older child before

starting for school, and if it was insisted upon by parents, would save much trouble in after life.

A healthy child should have a good breakfast. It is very well for those who have nothing to do but lie in bed until noon to go without breakfast, but a healthy, active boy cannot throw snowballs or jump hitching-posts on the way to school with an empty stomach, when his heart alone has done enough work during the night to correspond to a fairly good run, and then be expected to do three or four hours' hard work in school.

The hours for meals should be regular, but if a child persistently gets hungry between meals, and there is quite a long interval from breakfast to lunch or dinner, it is better to give a glass of milk and a cracker rather than to let the child take nibbles right up to lunch-time, and then have absolutely no appetite. A child does not eat as much as an adult, and the stomach is empty rather sooner than the usual four to five hours, and there is, consequently, need of food oftener.

Supposing a child gets to school at nine A.M., the breakfast should be early enough for the meal to be eaten slowly, say seven-thirty to seven-forty-five A.M.

Then the child may have a light lunch in school at eleven A.M. This may be omitted in children over ten to twelve years old. Dinner will be at one-thirty and supper at six to six-thirty, and the menu taken from the following list:

Breakfast.—Fruits: oranges, apples without skins or cores, pears, baked apples, peaches, prunes, figs, hot-house grapes with seeds removed, common grapes in older children, and strawberries with care. Cereals: oatmeal, cornmeal, hominy, rice, wheatlet, wheatena, cracked wheat, changed from time to time, with sugar and cream. Eggs, chops, steak, fish, bacon, well-made corn-beef hash, creamed potatoes, toast, dried bread and butter, brownbread, milk, cocoa, chocolate, water.

Morning Lunch.—Glass of milk, crackers, bread and butter, cold roast beef, lamb, chicken, or turkey sandwich.

Dinner.—Clear soup, beef, mutton, chicken, or turkey broth, purée of peas. Meat: roast lamb or mutton, roast beef, beefsteak, lamb chop, mutton chop, chicken, turkey, squab, game for older children, sweetbreads. Oysters. Fish. Vegetables: baked, mashed, or stewed potatoes, spinach, spaghetti with tomato sauce, stewed celery, cauliflower, asparagus, peas, beans, onions, carrots, turnips. Dessert: junket, custard, rice-pudding, jellies, ice-cream.

Supper.—Bread and milk, milk-toast, cereals, stewed prunes, marmalade, bread and butter or bread and butter and sugar, cornmeal mush with molasses or syrup.

Children up to six to seven years old should not eat ham, sausage, pork, kidneys, liver, pastries, griddle-cakes, fresh bread, hot biscuit, preserves, tea, coffee.

No definite rules can be set down for every child as to the time for meals, the number of meals, and the amount to be eaten at one time. The best guides to the child's condition are the same as in infancy, the weight and color of the lips.

The time for meals will vary with the child, the hours at school, the distance from school, and the family domestic arrangements. There is only one point I wish to mention in this connection, and that is the time for giving the heaviest meal. Shall it be at noon or at night? The following authors have been freely consulted in preparing this article: Jacobi, Holt, Griffith, Thompson, and Hogan. I cannot find that any differ on this point. It seems to be the general advice to give the heavy meal at noon, and yet there seems to be reasons why this should not be done. The question will usually be settled in any particular family by the habits of the parents; if it is the custom to have late dinners, the child will have late dinners.

The reasons why a late dinner seems advisable are: First, if the supper (and a light one at that) comes at six P.M. and breakfast at eight A.M., it means that the child will go thirteen to fourteen hours without food. Many children will become hungry during the night by this method. Second, if the heavy meal comes at noon, it means that the child has either to study or play when the stomach is taxed to its utmost capacity and when it needs all the blood at its command, and really cannot or should not spare the blood necessary for active mental or physical work. It is a well-observed physiological fact in animals as well as in man that there is a tendency to sleep after a full meal.

Such an observation is not to be neglected. It is true that children can get up from the dinner-table and play as hard as ever, often with impunity. But often it disagrees with them. Now it seems as if the proper time for the heavy meal is after the day's work has been done, when the body and mind can be at rest. By this means also a longer time is given for the digestion of the heaviest meal, the one necessitating a longer time, before food is again taken into the stomach. At any rate, it is well for young children to take their daily nap after the heavy noonday meal.

(To be continued.)